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# Latin American Trends

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151

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# LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

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*CONTENTS*

July 21, 1976

NR

Argentina: A Blow Against the Terrorists..... 2

NR



Approved for Release: 2018/10/02 C06628098

Approved for Release: 2018/10/02 C06628098



3.5(c)

Argentina: A Blow Against the Terrorists

The death of Argentine guerrilla leader Roberto Santucho and six of his comrades probably is a decisive blow to the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), the revolutionary/terrorist group that has been harried by military forces for more than a year. A cadre of dedicated revolutionaries remains, however, and will probably continue to mount acts of violence.

Santucho, along with one of his chief lieutenants, was killed on July 19 when army troops stormed a hideout near Buenos Aires. Earlier this month, another leader was killed in a similar raid. Several months ago, captured documents revealed that the organization was in deep trouble. At that time, 240 members had been killed by government forces and 800 were in prison. The organization's treasury, once estimated in millions of dollars, was said to have dwindled to about $100,000.

The other major guerrilla organization, the Montoneros, has suffered comparatively little damage during the army's counterterrorist campaign. Security forces have confiscated a large quantity of weapons, but the organization remains viable, well-armed, and committed. Moreover, the impact of Santucho's death on the terrorists should not be overestimated. Argentine guerrilla leaders have never sought to develop personal charismatic images. As a consequence, the organizations became far more famous than the leaders, about whom little is known. The two other most prominent figures among the terrorists, for example, are Roberto Quieto and Mario Firmenich of the Montoneros. Quieto was arrested several months ago by the military and presumably is still being held. Firmenich's whereabouts and activities are unknown.

In any case, the serious reverses suffered by the ERP may force the remnants of the group to try to



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link up with the Montoneros, who have long advocated a broad-based "National Liberation Front." Efforts to form such an alliance in the past failed. The Montoneros, in fact, now may be reluctant to affiliate with the survivors because they fear the ERP has been penetrated by the police.

The government has badly needed a success against the insurgents both to mollify right-wing critics within the military and to demonstrate to the populace that it can handle the terrorist problem. There are signs that Argentines are fed up with the terrorists and are beginning to inform police about suspected terrorists and hideouts. Santucho's death should encourage further cooperation and increase the momentum of the government's campaign against all terrorists.

3.5(c)

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